REPORT ON JUNE 28 NATIONAL STUDENT ANTI-APARtheid STRATEGY SESSION

Following a year of dramatic campus protest, the American Committee on Africa initiated a June 28th Student Anti-Apartheid Strategy Session to discuss major political issues before the campus movement and plans for coordinated action. The meeting was attended by 150 activists from 50 campuses nationwide as well as representatives from key national anti-apartheid organizations such as: TransAfrica, Washington Office on Africa, Clergy and Laity Concerned, and the Southern Africa Support Project.

The meeting concluded with a call for a National Protest Day for Divestment and Sanctions in Solidarity with Southern African Political Prisoners for Friday, October 10, 1986. The call is for campus and community groups to organize protests on a decentralized basis nationwide, coinciding with the United Nations' marking of International Day in Solidarity with Southern African Political Prisoners. Participants agreed to encourage direct action protests targeting corporate collaborators with apartheid as well as engaging in campus protest that might involve shantytown construction and other escalated forms of action. Already the October 10th call has been endorsed by the broadly based "Call to Conscience" network which is putting in place a nationwide emergency response network to events in South Africa.

The Strategy Meeting followed a June 27th Hearing before the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid involving 25 campus anti-apartheid groups. Among those testifying were students from Universities of North Carolina, California (UCLA), Utah, Hawaii, Illinois, Wisconsin (Madison), Texas, Florida, Washington, as well as Kansas, Michigan State, Arizona State, Vanderbilt, Purdue, Northwestern, Boston, Yale, Texas Christian, John Hopkins and Penn State Universities along with the Atlanta and DC Student Coalitions Against Apartheid and Racism, Alabama A & M, Dartmouth and Hamilton Colleges. The testimony will be published by the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid.

The UN Hearing and Strategy Session provided an important opportunity to summarize actions and take scope of the burgeoning campus anti-apartheid movement. With the crisis intensifying in southern Africa and the Reagan Administration desperately maneuvering to avoid sanctions, the campus movement must continue to play a cutting edge role in rejecting collaboration with apartheid and developing solidarity with the liberation struggles in South Africa and Namibia. Hopefully, campus groups will develop communication links this fall and organize regional and other gatherings to build 1987 weeks of Action and other mobilizations.

While this report was being prepared, on July 18 the University of California Regents voted 13-9 for total divestment of $3.1 billion linked to South Africa over a four year period. This tremendous victory is a testament to the power of direct action protests at Berkeley, UCLA, and other campuses and most fundamentally is due to the people of South Africa and Namibia who have refused to be silenced by the bullets, whips and torture of the racist apartheid regime.
I THE CRISIS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

David Ndaba, a member of the ANC and graduate student at Morehouse College, began the meeting with an analysis of the current crisis in southern Africa. Ten years after the Soweto uprisings the struggle is nearing its conclusion in southern Africa, Ndaba said, yet the "apex of the mountain is always the steepest part" and the white minority regime will bitterly contest power.

Ndaba emphasized the role of the United Democratic Front in sparking a People's State of Emergency that has rendered South Africa ungovernable. At this time the strategic objective of the broad liberation front is to move from "ungovernability to people's power". Such power is based on politically controlling areas block by block--leaving the white authorities in control only of the physical space the army occupies. The establishment of people's courts has helped isolate white administrators and been important in the initial institutionalization of popular power. In addition, the provision of services, and food distribution is occurring in some areas.

Ndaba pointed out that the Reagan Administration's policy of "constructive engagement" not only aided apartheid in South Africa but entrenched the regime's illegal occupation of Namibia and encouraged attacks on the frontline states. Thus the movement in this country should not just be against apartheid but must act in solidarity with the struggle throughout southern Africa.

II PRESENTATION ON SANCTIONS LEGISLATION

Damu Smith, director of the Washington Office on Africa, emphasized the importance of student pressure in support of Congressional sanctions. On August 15 the Senate passed a set of sanctions that are far from adequate. The bill does include trade restrictions affecting imports of South African coal, steel, textiles, and agricultural products. However, unlike the Dellums bill passed in the House, it does not mandate withdrawal of U.S. investment from South Africa. Even the ban on new U.S. investment has loopholes allowing reinvestment of profits.

This month a House/Senate Conference Committee will try to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate bills.

Immediately call and write your Representatives and Senators to urge the House/Senate Conference Committee to accept the sanctions passed by the House, for full disinvestment in 180 days and a virtual trade embargo:

Congressional Switchboard (for all): 202-224-3121

Addresses: U.S. Senate, Wash DC 20515 & US House of Reps Wash 20510
III RACISM AND THE ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

During the discussion participants brought out the problems of racism in the movement as well as general and specific suggestions to overcome such difficulties. David Ndaba made the point that the discussion should be conceptualized as "How to build unity in the movement" with racism being seen as one major obstacle to that unity.

In terms of analyzing and identifying the problem of racism the following points were made:

1) The issue of racism in the movement is an issue of power. (This is related to the definition of racism as prejudice plus power). If you have power make sure that Black students are included in the decision-making process and that goals are set to empower Third World students. At the same time we cannot let the issue of racism divide the movement and must sustain Third World leadership while maintaining democratic procedures for choosing leadership.

2) White students have to deepen their understanding of the meaning of racism for Black people—that it is a matter of life and death. White activists must also examine their relationships with Blacks and Black issues, especially given the centrality of racism in this country's history and the U.S. propaganda of racism worldwide. More specifically, we must all keep in mind the legacy of repression against the Black community in the 1960s and the ongoing financial pressure and harassment of Black students.

3) At many campuses the failure of anti-apartheid groups to address issues of institutionalized racism has led to loss of support, especially by Black students.

4) If one grows up in the United States there is no way to avoid being racist and sexist by the nature of the socialization process. The importance for both individuals and organizations is to be conscious of these problems and deal openly with the issues.

5) In Canada racism is based on language and culture and there exists no communication between the English and French university movements. The Black community itself is divided along language lines. As in the United States unity would greatly increase the effectiveness of anti-apartheid activities.

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In terms of overcoming problems of racism within the movement and developing an anti-racist agenda the following points were made:

1) It is important to explicitly structure in Black representation in anti-apartheid groups, along with making the political links to struggles against institutionalized racism. Everyone (even Reagan) is "against apartheid". Thus by making the link to domestic racism, we are developing a more progressive, less cooptable movement.

2) Black students must organize themselves and develop an anti-racist agenda. In this connection there is a need to develop unity between Black and other Third World campus organizations. From this unity comes greater confidence in working and communicating with white students, and in getting issues of racism addressed.

3) By defining the struggle in South Africa as being against white settler colonialism, not just apartheid greater clarity will be gained in developing our own movement. In that connection racism can be grasped as part of the ideology of white settler colonialism. Understanding this point, whites in this country must be involved in supporting Native American struggles in the United States. Today Big Mountain is one such vital struggle. There are direct parallels between that struggle and the resistance of Black South Africans to forced removals and the bantustan policy.

4) In developing greater unity in action there had to be respect shown for the history of struggle spearheaded by Black students in the Chicago area.

5) In dealing with racism there has to be dialogue with, not isolation of Black students. We need to learn about each other culturally and historically to develop real unity—mutual solidarity.

6) In Boston there were several lessons drawn from the experience of organizing the April 4th protest: a) working with area high schools (in mostly Black Roxbury) was important in making the connection to racism at home. b) Linking up to other anti-apartheid groups in the region was also important (35 schools took part in the April 4th action). c) We must emphasize that "minority" groups are also those with the least income. Thus addressing racism means dealing with issues of class and exploitation.

7) An anti-racist packet needs to be developed and distributed nationwide. We must recognize our role in history: our generation's task to transform the social change movement in the United States by emphasizing the centrality of the struggle against racism.

8) Anti-apartheid organizations must make support for programs organized by Black and other Third World groups a central political principle. Endorsing and mobilizing for Black History month is important, and will strengthen joint planning for the March 21-April 6 Weeks of Action.
IV DIRECT ACTION DISCUSSION

During the past 15 months there has been a significant escalation in the tactics used by students organizing for South Africa-related divestment. The emergence of what can be broadly termed "direct action" has taken the form of building blockades, sit-ins, and especially this year the construction and defense of shantytowns. Such protests exemplify the view that appealing or pressuring Trustees to divest through traditional means is no longer sufficient. Many students feel that "direct action" is called for to force Trustees to change their policies, while heightening the overall political impact of student anti-apartheid organizing.

On June 28th participants made a number of central points:

1) Politically, direct action protests have been important in creating a climate against U.S. investment in South Africa and in radicalizing students.

2) Such protests have been difficult to absorb leaving school administrations (and in some cases state authorities) the difficult choice of granting concessions or repressing activists.

3) Problems have arisen given the different levels of militancy in campus movements. This makes it vital not to put oneself out as a vanguard. In other words while engaging in direct action, do not close out links to the less militant.

4) In organizing direct actions, it is vital to be aware of cultural differences between Black and white activists. There exist different styles of activism, and Third World students have historically been more vulnerable within white institutions.

5) In developing direct action strategies, many groups have developed a broad tactical division of labor. There are some students who might concentrate on education, while others develop direct action suggestions. Once direct actions are initiated there is also a division of labor between those willing to be arrested, and those playing support roles.

6) In the discussion one participant defined direct action as action that we ourselves can take to impede U.S.-South African ties—such as protests disrupting the actual operations of South African Airways and U.S. companies.

7) Many participants noted the need to be organized in our responses to university repression—whether in the form of legal or disciplinary action. Disciplinary and legal proceedings can be used to further expose university complicity with apartheid. In fact such exposure has often led university authorities to drop charges against protesters.

8) At some schools divestment protesters have had to deal with right-wing violence. Such violence can be counterproductive since it builds sympathy for activists and renews their determination. On the other hand, actual or threatened violence can discourage new students from getting involved or give administrators an excuse to crack down on protest. Right-wing violence parallels a national effort by the Young Republicans (who are financed by the Republican Party) to thwart the campus divestment movement which threatens Reagan's policy of "constructive engagement."
V COORDINATED FALL ACTION

During the last part of the meeting participants considered proposals for coordinated fall action. The debate centered around two proposals: one by the American Committee on Africa calling for decentralized protest on October 10, and the other by the DC Student Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism and the U.S. Student Association (USSA) calling on students to protest in Washington, DC on that date. A third proposal put forth by Mitchell Cohen of Brooklynites Against Apartheid and an activist at SUNY/Stonybrook supported the call for decentralized activity, but emphasized the centrality of direct action protests targeting major corporations involved in South Africa.

Proponents of decentralized protest stressed that during fall semester it was critical to reconstitute student groups by focusing protests on the campus—rather than pulling key organizers to Washington DC. Others felt that it was necessary for students to join directly in the battle for divestment (corporate withdrawal) and that lobbying and protest in Washington DC was vital in that regard. During the debate proponents of both proposals made it clear that they did not reject either decentralized action or Washington DC based action on October 10, but the difference lay in where the emphasis would be.

The proposal for decentralized action passed by a wide margin, after it was pointed out that by October 10 Congress would already be in recess. It was also agreed that direct actions at corporate sites would be encouraged as part of the October 10 call for decentralized protest. That proposal had suggested that Mobil Oil, General Motors, IBM and Citibank be targeted on October 10.

While there were no formal decisions on other proposed ideas, a number of suggestions emerged: a) Shanty town construction on Friday, October 10. Though local tactical flexibility is essential, b) Class boycotts (Howard University students are already considering this) c) Highlighting the plight of political prisoners by wearing armbands and sashes with their names and observing a minute of silence at 1pm Eastern Time. d) Protests targeting trustees with links to companies involved in South Africa (Penn, State).